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CURRENT OPINION

God and Modern Democracy

A new democratic conception of God, which regards him as less an objective autocrat and more a fraternal helper, is gradually being formed by modern civilization, according to Professor H. A. Overstreet in the January *Hibbert Journal*. There are many signs which point to a more or less general dissatisfaction with the traditional world-view. In religious circles it expresses itself in a vague unrest and incipient skepticism, a feeling of the unreality of the accustomed religious ministrations. Up to recent years, the typical point of view of society, in its legal and social regulations, its morality, religion, and art, has, in greater or less degree, been determined by the thought of class differentiation. From the Code of Hammurabi to the common law of England in the nineteenth century, the interpretation of human values has in greater or less degree been in terms of class status. For a class-constituted society, there was but one possible thought, namely, that the mass of beings must be directed by superior ones who are not of their number. Society was regarded as, in the main, passive material to be molded by the heaven- or blood-favored few.

On the other hand, the spirit of modern thought is democratic. Human society is not passive material, molded to the will of the few. It is active, self-sustaining, self-advancing. The present change in social and scientific outlook is gradually effecting a modification of our idea of God which, in the accomplished result, will be as profoundly momentous as any of the great changes of the past. We are today witnessing the transition from the last of the oligarchic views of the universe to a view of the world consistent with the spirit of evolutionary democracy. Professor Overstreet quotes approvingly from Robert

A. Wood's recent work on *Democracy* as follows:

The deistic conception of an age now completely past, that God is some distant monarch, will fade into the darkness with the social system which gave it rise; and society as a federal union, in which each individual and every form of human association shall find free and full scope for a more abundant life, will be the large figure from which is projected the conception of the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

Judaism and Modern Biblical Scholarship

The approach of modern critical scholarship to the Bible should not be feared, but should be welcomed, by the devout Jew. So writes Rev. Dr. J. Abelson, in the March number of the *Jewish Review*. To shut out from our study the modern critical literature which now encompasses the Bible upon all sides is to make ourselves immeasurably the losers. For, quite apart from the question of the truth or untruth of the new material, it is undeniable that so many fresh points of view are brought into being, so many unexpected vistas of thought and knowledge are opened up, that if the study of the Bible were a pleasure hitherto, it is more than a pleasure now. We all know that one of the basic contentions of the higher criticism is that the books of the Old Testament are the result of processes of compilation and combination, and in modern phrase, "editing." It is maintained that the hand of a "reviser" is visible in many of the narratives, that many an episode or biography is taken from some older source of which very little or no trace has come down to us; and that a book which bears the name of an author often contains matter which must be attributed to some other author or authors. Tidings like these are, to say the least, very upsetting

to some Jews, and positively painful to some others. But though some feel much, and are very much outraged, it seems that there are compensating advantages which are great and numerous enough to oust all sense of danger. The higher criticism of the Bible is the order of the day. Much of it is brilliant and true. Much of it is audacious and fallacious and "not proven." But the fact that it has come to stay need not make the devout and loving upholder of Judaism feel that he is on the horns of a dilemma in having to choose between the old standpoint and the new. It is not a question of being forced to make a choice at all. The Bible is far too great a book to be dismissed with one, and one only, school of interpretation. By all means let the light fall on it through all sorts, and any number, of windows.

Religious Need of Sacramental Feasts

Writing on "The Lord's Supper" in the January number of the *Reformed Church Review*, R. Leighton Gerhart seems to take somewhat of a mediating position between the views that the Supper as observed by the church is a synthetic composition of elements derived from various sources and that it is strictly an innovation by Jesus.

He contends that one way of arriving at truth is through the sacramental meal. This is true of the meals of paganism as well as of Christianity, but what the sources are for the implication that pagan meals were sacramental is not mentioned. These pagan observances went part of the way in arriving at truth. In the Lord's Supper we find the journey completed. This is equivalent to saying that Jesus took over an established religious institution and gave it an improved and fuller meaning.

The author is especially emphatic in insisting on the vital relation between religion and religious eating. He claims that the needs of pagan worshipers brought into existence pagan religious meals. So

great is this need in all religions, maintains the writer, that, if Jesus had not instituted a Lord's Supper, one would undoubtedly have been created by the church to supply the want.

The relation of the "broken" body and the "shed" blood of Jesus to the Supper on the one hand and to the believer on the other is thus described:

Jesus gave us his broken body and his blood poured out because he could not give himself as the food of man in any other way. There is no such thing as the giving of moral nourishment, spiritual food, except by way of sacrifice. . . . Therefore it was not simply his body and blood that he gave, but his body broken and his blood shed.

The Gospel of Peter

"Is the Gospel of Peter an independent witness to the Resurrection?" asks C. H. Turner in "The Gospel of Peter" in the January *Journal of Theological Studies*. His answer is in the negative. After an extensive examination of the four canonical gospels and a comparison of them with the newer "Peter" he finds that the latter is not independent. His conclusion is as follows:

The attempt has been made to show that, due regard being had to the circumstances and the time when "Peter" wrote, comparison of the documents makes it infinitely more probable than not that he was acquainted with, and in his own gospel used, all four gospels of the church. It would be difficult to say what conception could survive of literary contact, if its cogency was not admitted in this case. But once it is admitted that "Peter" used the Fourth Gospel as one of his sources, then again it seems at least much more probable that, in the story introduced by the closing words of the extant fragment, he was depending on that gospel rather than on the lost end of Mark, which there is not the least reason (from any other point of view) to suppose had survived as late as the second century A.D. Therefore "Peter" adds nothing to the witness of the earliest tradition of the Resurrection.

Paul the Author of the Pastorals?

The pastoral epistles are the work of Paul, concludes Rev. T. Herbert Brindley, D.D., writing on "The Pastoral Epistles" in the *Interpreter* for January. He first argues that there is nothing un-Pauline about them, or, at least, that there is nothing about them that may not conceivably have come from Paul. The vocabulary employed contains words not used by Paul elsewhere, but this is due to his addressing a different situation. The figures of speech, such as word-play, metaphor, etc., are all Pauline. The author is at no loss to find a place in Pauline chronology for locating the letters. Luke, who wrote Acts, skips over great stretches of Paul's life, and the pastorals can be placed in any one of several of these gaps, concerning which Luke left us no definite data.

Co-partnership and Industrial Unrest

The failure of co-partnership as ordinarily carried out in business to solve the question of the relation between labor and capital is the theme of "Co-partnership and Labor Unrest," by H. Sanderson Furniss, in the January *Economic Review* (quarterly). The root cause of labor unrest, says the author, is that there is something radically wrong with the system under which industry is carried on today, "a system which cannot, no matter how hard a man works, give to a working man more than \$500 a year" (the figure applies to England).

Will co-partnership remedy this state of affairs? It will not, answers the author, if the employer says to the employee, "Work harder and earn me more profit, and I will divide the profit with you." This, it is maintained, is the usual course followed in co-partnerships as they now exist in most manufacturing centers. The master does not give anything to the workman; he simply makes the workman work harder

to earn more and then takes from him a part of the additional earning. If co-partnership is to be a success and is to settle prevalent labor troubles, there must be some sort of sacrifice on the part of the master in favor of the laborer. This will have a large influence in rendering conditions more stable.

Mind Cures Scientific

That so-called "mind cures" can be satisfactorily explained by science and in no other way is the contention of Sir Thomas Clouston, M.D., writing in the January *Quarterly Review*.

The writer is quite willing to admit the reality of such cures. The position which he takes is that the scientific explanation of them is the only possible explanation. His own words follow:

Modern science claims to study and explain the occurrences of so-called "mind cures" in diseased and disordered conditions of body. It admits the existence of such cures, but calls in the brain as the direct agent through which they are brought about. It is now able to point out that there are in the brain machinery and activities sufficient to explain them. The mind comes in by setting the brain to work. Science emphatically repudiates the mystical, miraculous, and superstitious views of such mind cures as being unreasonable and degrading. Such views, hitherto common, result from ignorance and lend themselves to all sorts of quackery and deceit. Science now includes mind as well as life and matter within the scope of its investigations; and by this means only will humanity derive the full benefits which a study of the effects of mind, acting through the brain, will enable us to effect in curing diseased and abnormal states.

The Sufficiency of the English Bible

In the *Bible Magazine* for April, 1913, there is an excellent article by Dr. Louis Matthews Sweet on "The Study of the English Bible," with the subtitle, "The Study of Biblical Words." The possibility

of doing exact and scholarly work on the basis of a translation is the question at issue. While some are ever ready to insist that versions cannot satisfy the demands of original scholarship, it is to be noted that there are comparatively few original scholars, philologists to whom grammar and lexicon are not ultimate facts; that, while in the interpretation of the original languages of the Bible creative work is for the few, to the man of average sound scholarly ability who, humbly recognizing his debt to many workers in many fields, makes proper use of the English Bible there comes opportunity for the attainment of genuine worth as a scholar.

The English Bible in itself, aside from questions of relationship to original documents, is great enough and complex enough to appeal to the highest scholarship. The mastery of this peer of English classics demands literary and spiritual appreciation and calls for the exercise of one's best powers of observation and analysis. "So great is it, in its complexity of structure, in its majesty of idea and form, in its sweep of thought and varied richness of content, that contact with it and the attempt to master it are a broadening and educative process of unparalleled value."

Moreover, the ripest results of learning are embodied in the English translation. For English versions have kept pace with the development of the English language on the one side, and, on the other, with the development of oriental philology and archaeology. New material is constantly appearing, like the recent Aramaic documents from Elephantine, Greek and Roman papyri from Egypt and elsewhere, and is steadily being embodied in discussions, in commentaries, and finally in translation.

But the decisive factor in the determination of the meaning of words is to be found in the biblical usage itself. It is possible,

therefore, for the careful student of the English Bible to undertake the accurate study of words. Derivation, root-meaning, in the extra-biblical usage of a word, are only partial guides to the meaning which that word has within the Scriptures themselves. As a word is used by different writers to convey combinations of ideas, a rather definite body of characteristic meanings will gather about the word. Hence the light upon the meaning of words gained from biblical usage cannot be neglected.

Now, undeniably, the method is that of original scholarship dealing with the sources. We admire and envy the ability of such men to handle their materials, to sift, analyze, and interpret complex masses of facts. But strangely enough, in this present instance and in others, the actual, positive results in the way of assured knowledge, by a method of handling complex materials equally direct and original, are attainable for the student of the English Bible.

Making Temples Schoolhouses

The *Peking Daily News* suggests that the present need of the new Chinese republic for quarters in which to conduct schools could be met by transforming abandoned temples in various quarters into buildings for purposes of public instruction. Especially could this be done in and about Canton and Hunan, where there is a large number of temples to the memory of numerous deities about whom nothing or very little is known. In some places the plan has been tried and has met with little opposition on the part of the people. The only real clamor against the move came from a number of lazy priests in charge of certain shrines, who were compelled to go to work for a living. With the abolition of the temples went also the abolition of various feast days, which hereafter are to be devoted to Confucian celebrations.